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A Study of Organizational Cynicism and How It Is Affected by Social Exchange Relationships at Work

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Abstract

Drawing on social exchange theory, organizational cynicism has been suggested as a central consequence of psychological contract (PC) breach. In this study, we examine the extent to which social exchange relationships with the supervisor and coworkers have an impact on cynical reactions to broken employer promises. Based on two-wave data with a time-lag of three months from a sample of 781 employees, we investigated the influence of employees' perceived PC breach on cynical thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, and the moderating effects of leader–member exchange (LMX) and coworker exchange (CWX). Using structural equation modeling, we found that PC breach was positively associated with cognitive, affective, and behavioral cynicism. Our analysis further revealed that LMX and CWX moderated different dimensions of organizational cynicism: when LMX was high, employees reacted more sensitively to a PC breach with cognitive and behavioral cynicism. In contrast, CWX attenuated employees' affective cynical response to a PC breach. The differentiated perspective on cognitive, affective, and behavioral cynicism as well as the identified moderating effects help explain varying strengths of the PC breach–organizational cynicism association found in previous research and highlight contingencies related to social exchange relationships at work.

Keywords: organizational cynicism; psychological contract breach; leader–member exchange; coworker exchange.

Practitioner Points

- This study shows that cynicism toward the organization varies with the extent of perceived PC breach indicating that organizations should actively manage employees' psychological contracts.
- LMX tends to reduce cynicism toward the organization (direct effect) but high LMX employees seem to react more sensitively to severe PC breaches (interaction effect).

Thus, high LMX cannot completely compensate employees' cynical reaction to a PC breach. Leaders should be made aware of that and should be trained to effectively manage employees' expectations to prevent PC breaches.

- Employees' cynical emotional reaction to severe PC breaches was buffered by high levels of CWX. Hence, organizations should foster interpersonal relationships among coworkers.

A Study of Organizational Cynicism and How It Is Affected by Social Exchange Relationships at Work

Complex decision making structures and conflicting interests of stakeholders make it difficult to align organizational goals with every action taken by its agents. Resulting inconsistencies may be perceived as a lack of integrity and open the doors to organizational cynicism (Andersson, 1996; Andersson & Bateman, 1997). Organizational cynicism is a negative attitude toward the employing organization, comprising cognitive, affective, and behavioral components, that result from a critical appraisal of organizational motives, actions, and values (Bedeian, 2007; Dean, Brandes, & Dharwadkar, 1998). Employees with a cynical attitude toward the organization believe the organization lacks integrity, experience negative affect toward their employer, and demonstrate tendencies to disparaging and critical behaviors (Dean et al., 1998). Numerous studies documented the negative consequences of organizational cynicism, e.g., on employees' job performance (e.g., Byrne & Hochwarter, 2008; Chiaburu, Peng, Oh, Banks, & Lomeli, 2013), turnover intention (e.g., Chiaburu et al., 2013; Naus, Van Iterson, & Roe, 2007), and deviant workplace behavior (e.g., Evans, Goodman, & Davis, 2010). Once organizational cynicism has taken root, it can spread across the entire organization causing tremendous damage to its reputation and success (Dulnik, 2018; Wilkerson, Evans, & Davis, 2008).

Existing research suggests that a perceived psychological contract (PC) breach, which occurs if an organization does not fulfill explicit or implicit promises regarding the employment relationship (Rousseau, 1989, 1995), is a strong predictor of organizational cynicism (e.g., Andersson, 1996; Chiaburu et al., 2013; Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003). A closer inspection of extant research reveals, however, that effect sizes of the PC breach–cynicism relationship have varied substantially in previous studies and meta-analytical findings (see Chiaburu et al., 2013),

pointing to the presence of moderating effects. To date, the study of boundary conditions determining *when* some employees develop cynical thoughts, emotions, and/or behaviors as a result of a PC breach and others do not, remains scarce. Based on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and the notion that organizational cynicism is a socially construed phenomenon influenced by signals of people in the organization (Chiaburu et al., 2013; Cole, Bruch, & Vogel, 2006; Dean et al., 1998; Gkorezis, Petridou, & Xanthiakos, 2014), we argue that cynical reactions to breached employer promises are contingent on an employee's social relationships in his or her immediate work environment. Specifically, the aim of this study is to examine the moderating roles of the exchange relationships with supervisors (i.e., LMX) and coworkers (i.e., CWX) on the association between PC breach and the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of organizational cynicism.

Although LMX and CWX are both understood as social support resources for the employee, their roles in shaping cynical reactions to a PC breach might be different. Employees in high LMX relationships are likely to feel as valued members of the organization and protected from organizational perils such as PC breaches (Alcover, Rico, Turnley, & Bolino, 2016; Loi, Chan, & Lam, 2014; Restubog, Bordia, Tang, & Krebs, 2010). A PC breach for employees in high LMX relationships is consequently supposed to initiate stronger cynical reactions because this sense of appreciation and protection is violated (Restubog et al., 2010). In contrast, employees in high CWX relationships are assumed to show weaker cynical reactions to a PC breach. Working on the same hierarchical level and interacting more frequently (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; Ferris & Mitchell, 1987), coworkers develop an accurate picture of each other's current wellbeing and can provide timely help and social support in difficult situations (Hüffmeier & Hertel, 2011).

This study contributes to the literature in several theoretical and practical ways. Theoretically, we first provide new insights into the relevance of PC breach for explaining the occurrence of organizational cynicism by taking into account the social exchange relationships with leaders and coworkers as potential moderators. Second, our findings highlight that leaders and coworkers seem to have different roles in employees' cynical response to PC breaches. Differentiating the moderating effects across the cognitive, affective, and behavioral level can contribute to reconcile inconsistent findings on the role of social exchange relationships in response to PC breaches. Third, the systematic analysis of the three cynicism components contributes to conceptual clarity (Breckler, 1984; Dean et al., 1998) and further explains different strengths of the PC breach–cynicism association found in previous research. Practically, these insights can help organizations to better understand why employees' cynical reactions to unfulfilled promises vary in magnitude and form. While leaders, as intermediary between the organization and employees, should try to avoid unintentional PC breaches, our study emphasizes the relevance of coworkers in the aftermath of PC breaches, which may often be overlooked by organizations.

Organizational Cynicism as a Reaction to PC Breach

Organizational cynicism is an attitude toward the employing organization containing cognitive, affective, and behavioral components (Dean et al., 1998). Cognitive cynicism manifests in suspicious thoughts and doubts that one's employer is fair, honest, and sincere. Cynical employees assume malicious intent behind organizational actions and believe that the organization lacks integrity (Dean et al., 1998). Affective cynicism involves emotional reactions such as tension, irritation, aggravation, and anxiety toward the organization (Dean et al., 1998).

Behavioral cynicism describes overt actions, e.g., critical statements that reveal the organization's lack of honesty and sincerity, and pessimistic predictions about the future course of action in the organization (Brandes & Das, 2006; Dean et al., 1998). The attitude organizational cynicism needs to be distinguished from trait cynicism. Trait cynicism is defined as a general and relatively stable negative belief about human nature that people are dishonest, selfish, and take advantage of others whenever possible (Costa, Zonderman, McCrae, & Williams, 1986; Kanter & Mirvis, 1989). In contrast, organizational cynicism is specifically directed toward one's employing organization and supposed to develop through negative experiences at work (Andersson, 1996; Dean et al., 1998). Due to its malleability, the interest of this study lies in attitudinal cynicism because it is critical for organizations to understand more profoundly when and to which extent negative events at work trigger organizational cynicism among its workforce.

One such negative experience that has received much attention in the literature is PC breach (see Chiaburu et al., 2013). A PC is breached if "one's organization has failed to meet one or more obligations within one's psychological contract in a manner commensurate with one's contributions" (Morrison & Robinson, 1997, p. 230). Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) provide the conceptual basis for much of the research on employee reactions to PC breaches (Coyle-Shapiro, Pereira Costa, Doden, & Chang, 2019). If employees perceive that promises of the PC are not fulfilled, they reciprocate this mistreatment with a negative response. Recent insights from mostly qualitative work emphasize that employees' reaction is not entirely retaliative but entails sensemaking and self-defensive motives to reduce the perceived discrepancy and to eliminate the negative affect triggered by the PC breach (e.g., Bankins, 2015; Parzefall & Coyle-Shapiro, 2011). Examining organizational

cynicism as an outcome of PC breach captures these aspects as organizational cynicism is a critical multi-facetted response to make sense of puzzling and adverse workplace events (Naus et al., 2007) and a form of self-defense to cope with unpleasant experiences protecting oneself against future disappointments (Brandes & Das, 2006; Byrne & Hochwarter, 2008; Wanous, Reichers, & Austin, 1994). Further, it includes intentions to restore balance in the employment relationship (Andersson, 1996; Naus et al., 2007).

Empirical research has documented the positive association between PC breach and organizational cynicism (Chiaburu et al., 2013). However, most of these studies rely on either a global measure of cynicism (e.g., Li & Chen, 2018) or some of its subdimensions such as cognitive or affective cynicism (e.g., Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003), thereby not acknowledging its conceptual complexity. When investigating cynicism as a consequence of PC breach, using a global measure might obscure certain relationships as effect sizes might not be equal for each dimension. Human beings strive to maintain consistency in their attitudinal response (Breckler, 1984; Festinger, 1957). However, the underlying processes of cognition, affect, and behavior in response to an object are supposed to be different (Breckler, 1984). Individuals' efforts to regulate their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors can differ and depend on the various motives they pursue (Carver & Scheier, 2001). Cynicism serves sensemaking needs as well as self-defensive and retaliating motives (Brandes & Das, 2006; Naus et al., 2007). As these needs and motives may manifest on the cognitive, affective, and behavioral level to varying degrees, it is important to differentiate between the three dimensions of organizational cynicism. For example, dependent on an individual's perceived likelihood of a PC repair in the future, employees may still develop cynical thoughts but inhibit tendencies to disparaging behaviors, because these actions could lower the likelihood of repair (Tomprou, Rousseau, & Hansen,

2015). In addition to these theoretical arguments, prior evidence of divergent effect strengths for the cognitive, affective, and behavioral organizational cynicism components speaks in favor of their separate examination (Kim, Bateman, Gilbreath, & Andersson, 2009). In the following, we therefore argue for each component separately to postulate our hypotheses.

On a cognitive level, employees may first discern a discrepancy between what has been promised and what has been fulfilled by the employer after a PC breach. Thus, employees may begin a conscious cognitive process to find meaningful explanations (Bankins, 2015; Diehl & Coyle-Shapiro, 2019; Parzefall & Coyle-Shapiro, 2011). But failing to do so after a while, employees probably conclude that the organization has violated its reciprocating obligations. They start to doubt their employer's reliability and perceive uncertainty about future exchanges (Robinson, 1996). Employees are likely to infer that the organization lacks integrity, which leads to developing cynical thoughts (Dean et al., 1998).

On the affective level, research has found that the experience of a PC breach is strongly linked to an arousal of negative emotions as employees feel betrayed (e.g., Dulac, Coyle-Shapiro, Henderson, & Wayne, 2008; Robinson & Morrison, 2000). This negative emotional state, conveyed by the disappointment that their investment in the reciprocal relationship has not been rewarded properly, may dissipate and evolve into affective cynicism (Andersson, 1996; Tomprou et al., 2015). By taking on a cynical stance, employees may intend to protect themselves against future severe disappointments (Wanous et al., 1994).

Finally, employees are likely to reveal increased behavioral cynicism after a PC breach, e.g., by making critical and disparaging comments in front of others like customers to harm the organizations' reputation. This may be a way to let off their frustration (Brandes & Das, 2006) and to rebalance their relationship with the organization in return for the unfulfilled

promise (Andersson & Bateman, 1997). Evidence that employees engage in other rebalancing behaviors after a PC breach, e.g., counterproductive work behavior (Doden, Grote, & Rigotti, 2018; Griep, Vantilborgh, Baillien, & Pepermans, 2016), is in support of this. Moreover, reaffirming that the employer has breached their PC by expressing cynicism might strengthen employees' belief that retaliating behaviors are justified and thus serves to maintain a positive self-image (Griep & Vantilborgh, 2018; Naus et al., 2007).

While the direction of the resulting effects is assumed to be the same for the three cynicism components, the underlying processes and the effect sizes may differ, leading us to state our first hypothesis as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Employees' perceived PC breach is positively related to (a) cognitive, (b) affective, and (c) behavioral cynicism.

The intensifying effect of LMX

LMX denotes the dyadic social exchange relationship between supervisor and subordinate (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). The leader is a central agent in the employer–employee exchange relationship, often serving as the primary representation of the employer and intermediary through which organizational rewards and resources are distributed (Henderson, Wayne, Shore, Bommer, & Tetrick, 2008; Liden, Bauer, & Erdogan, 2004; Tekleab & Taylor, 2003). As a consequence, LMX is likely to interfere with employees' interpretation of and reaction to violations of the employment relationship, which is in line with the theoretical assumption that social exchange relationships are interdependent (Blau, 1964). Prior research has shown that high LMX leads to increased organizational commitment and identification because these employees feel as valued members of the organization, making the employer–employee

relationship more salient and important (Eisenberger et al., 2010; Loi et al., 2014). Thus, high LMX employees probably perceive low uncertainty and feel protected from organizational threats (Loi et al., 2014; Restubog et al., 2010). Under these circumstances, high LMX employees are supposed to be highly consternated by a PC breach and react more sensitively because they have not anticipated it. They are likely to perceive a strong inconsistency between their past experience in high LMX and the present PC breach. As a result of their efforts to deal with this large perceived inconsistency, they may reveal a more sensitive reaction to PC breaches with organizational cynicism.

On a cognitive level, the present inconsistency for high LMX employees may lead to a strong cognitive dissonance. Their leader, who is their primary organizational reference, conveys a sense of appreciation and protection, but the organization has breached a promise of the employment relationship. This strong dissonance may not be resolvable for high LMX employees. Consequently, these employees may develop stronger cynical thoughts that the organization is not fair or sincere and lacks integrity (Bankins, 2015). In contrast, low LMX employees are likely to already have a negative attitude toward the organization. Based on low confidence in their leader, a PC breach confirms employees in their negative perception and may not lead to significant changes in cynical thoughts.

On the affective level, the cynical reaction to a PC breach may be specifically strengthened by high LMX employees' intensified emotional disappointment. Due to its unexpectedness, a PC breach is likely to provoke stronger feelings of betrayal (Elangovan & Shapiro, 1998). Further, increased cynical emotions may arise as a response to the tension through ambiguous feelings toward their organization and the leader (Andersson, 1996; Dean et al., 1998) and aim at being prepared for future severe disappointments (Wanous et al., 1994). In

contrast, low LMX employees may be less emotionally sensitive to a PC breach because they are generally less attached to the organization (Loi et al., 2014), therefore ascribing less significance to the PC breach.

Finally and in line with the norm of reciprocity (Brandes & Das, 2006; Gouldner, 1960), employees in high LMX relationships may increasingly reveal cynical behaviors. Given the severity of their consternation, high LMX employees may feel a stronger urge to express their perceived and felt dissonance. By framing these inconsistencies, e.g., in sarcastic jokes, employees may try to keep their face and downplay the importance of the PC breach (Byrne & Hochwarter, 2008). In contrast, low LMX employees presumably care less about the organization and reveal their cynical behavior regardless of whether a PC breach has occurred or not. Taken together, we expect low LMX employees' organizational cynicism to remain largely unaffected on a high level across low and high degrees of PC breach. In contrast, the slope of high LMX employees is supposed to be strongly positive as these employees will react more sensitively with cynical thoughts, emotions, and behaviors to a major PC breach. Thus, our second hypothesis is as follows:

Hypothesis 2: LMX moderates the positive relationship between perceived PC breach and (a) cognitive, (b) affective, and (c) behavioral cynicism in the way that the relationship is stronger for high levels of LMX as opposed to low levels of LMX.

The buffering effect of CWX

CWX describes the quality of employees' social exchange relationship with their coworkers, reporting to the same supervisor (Sherony & Green, 2002). Contrary to LMX, CWX is a horizontal relationship with lower or absent power and status differences (Chiaburu &

Harrison, 2008; Diefendorff & Greguars, 2009), implying that employees in high CWX are unlikely to perceive the same kind of inconsistency under a PC breach as previously described for LMX. Instead, due to the more frequent and informal interactions (Diefendorff & Greguars, 2009; Hadley, 2014), coworkers are assumed to have a more accurate picture of each other's current wellbeing (Hüffmeier & Hertel, 2011). This bolsters coworkers' ability to provide social support that may help employees in high CWX to effectively cope with the negative consequences of a PC breach (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; McCarthy, Trougakos, & Cheng, 2016). In addition, employees may take into account close coworkers' negative workplace experiences when evaluating their PC breach (Diehl & Coyle-Shapiro, 2019; Solinger, 2019; Tomprou & Bankins, 2019). According to social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), coworkers' experiences form a social context that is important for interpreting the PC breach and may also contribute to buffering high CWX employees' cynical reaction to a severe PC breach.

On the cognitive level, numerous cues from employees' social environment, gained in high CWX through shared experiences, constitute a crucial component of the PC breach evaluation process and are important to cope with the breach (Diehl & Coyle-Shapiro, 2019; Ho & Levesque, 2005). By comparing and exchanging information with peers, these employees may be able to make better sense of the circumstances surrounding the PC breach (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010). Thus, high CWX employees may perceive a severe PC breach as less uncertainty provoking and personally less threatening (Tomprou & Bankins, 2019), thereby limiting a strong increase in cynical thoughts. In contrast, low CWX employees lack the perceived opportunity to seek coworkers' social support and insider knowledge from informal exchanges with coworkers. As a way to cope with the breach, low CWX employees may rather engage in mental

disengagement, which is likely to foster the development of cynical thoughts (Bankins, 2015; Skinner, Edge, Altman, & Sherwood, 2003; Tomprou et al., 2015).

On the affective level, strong CWX relationships facilitate empathic concern and compassion (Van Kleef et al., 2008; Woltin, Corneille, Yzerbyt, & Förster, 2011). Employees are likely to share all kinds of emotional events at work with coworkers (Hadley, 2014), and the frequent and also informal interactions among coworkers provide employees with timely socio-emotional support in high CWX (Hüffmeier & Hertel, 2011; Karasek, Triantis, & Chaudhry, 1982; Ng & Sorensen, 2008; Viswesvaran, Sanchez, & Fisher, 1999). Thus, high CWX employees may feel comfortable among their coworkers and can let go of their disappointment conveyed by the PC breach. Unburdening oneself to close colleagues may help to process negative emotions, eventually reducing one's cynical emotional response. In contrast, because they lack this socio-emotional support, low CWX employees may turn their disappointment into affective cynicism in order to protect themselves from future disappointment arising from PC breaches (Tomprou et al., 2015; Wanous et al., 1994).

Finally, we propose that high CWX employees react less strongly with cynical behavioral tendencies to a PC breach. Since they can promptly talk to their close coworkers, which helps to effectively deal with the perceived PC breach (Bankins, 2015; Tomprou et al., 2015), high CWX employees are likely to have a reduced urge to vent their rage through cynical comments—particularly outside the organization, e.g., toward customers to harm the organization's reputation as a form of retaliation. In support of this, research has shown that employees who feel closely connected to each other tend to generally deal better with inconsistencies and to be more forgiving toward their organization, e.g., after a PC breach (Epitropaki, 2013). Thus, employees' desire to take on a self-defensive attitude to maintain a

positive self-image is likely to dissolve as well. In fact, recent findings indirectly support this view by demonstrating that CWX buffers an increase in aggressive voice behavior and a drop in constructive voice behavior after a PC breach (Ng, Feldman, & Butts, 2014).

Taken together, we expect low CWX employees to reveal a stronger cynical reaction toward the organization after a PC breach. In contrast, the slope of high CWX employees is supposed to be weaker and vary less across low and high levels of PC breach as their cynical reaction will be buffered under high levels of PC breach. Thus, we formulate our third hypothesis as follows:

Hypothesis 3: CWX moderates the positive relationship between perceived PC breach and (a) cognitive, (b) affective, and (c) behavioral cynicism in the way that the relationship is weaker for high levels of CWX as opposed to low levels of CWX.

At this point, we acknowledge that sharing negative workplace experiences in high CWX might also have the potential to reinforce negative attitudes toward the PC breach. However, as employees in high CWX have an effective working relationship and want to help each other (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; Sherony & Green, 2002), high CWX coworkers may want to avoid strengthening the employee's PC breach perception and reaction. Acting in their coworker's best interest, high CWX coworkers are more likely to share experiences to provide comfort and identify possible coping strategies (Bankins, 2015). Especially under high levels of PC breach, CWX is therefore likely to buffer employees' cynical reaction as outlined above.

Method

Sample and Procedure

The data for testing our hypotheses were collected within a representative survey of employees in Switzerland. Based on a regionally stratified random sample drawn by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office in 2015, we received 4461 valid addresses in total and sent out a written invitation to participate in this survey. The invitation letter explained the background of the survey and gave individuals the option to respond online or to order a paper form. Net of individuals who were unreachable, unwilling or incapable to respond, 1504 individuals fulfilling the eligibility criteria of being between 16 and 65 years old and currently employed in Switzerland responded to our survey at Time 1 (T1) (89.6% online, 10.4% paper) and were invited to participate in a second wave of measurement three months later (T2). With a response rate of 70.5% (online: 73.9% , paper: 42.0%) for the second wave of measurement, we received a total of 1,061 surveys back (93.8% online, 6.2% paper). Employees preferring the paper form were on average older ($t(1059) = -7.18$, $p < .001$), had a lower educational level ($t(1054) = 5.63$, $p < .001$), and a higher organizational tenure ($t(1053) = -5.94$, $p < .001$). These differences highlight the importance of offering both paper and online questionnaires to ensure the inclusion of subgroups with lower computer affinity.

From this sample, we removed 280 cases because of several reasons. First, we excluded employees who worked less than 50% of a full-time equivalent and cases with job or supervisor changes between T1 and T2 because LMX and CWX take time to develop (Yukl, O'Donnell, & Taber, 2009). Second, cases were removed if employees worked in their family-owned business or family-like organizations with less than ten employees because it seems unlikely that employees can make a clear distinction between the social exchange counterparts as

the leader may often be the owner of the business or a coworker at the same time. Thus, the effective sample size of the current study was 781. To examine the possibility of a systematic bias in the final sample, we used unpaired *t* tests for a comparison with those who dropped out. The proportion of women in the final sample was slightly lower ($t(1490) = 2.19$, $p < .05$) and employees were on average 3.0 years older ($t(1502) = 4.58$, $p < .001$), better educated ($t(1484) = 5.32$, $p < .001$), and had a slightly higher tenure ($t(1486) = 4.11$, $p < .001$). Despite the differences on these demographic characteristics, the means of CWX, cognitive and affective cynicism, and negative affectivity did not significantly differ. In the final sample, only the mean of PC breach was lower ($t(1455) = -3.67$, $p < .001$), while the means of behavioral cynicism ($t(1052) = 2.00$, $p < .05$) and LMX ($t(1485) = 3.37$, $p < .01$) were higher. The lower mean in PC breach is probably due to the higher organizational tenure in our final sample because employees with unfulfilled PCs are likely to leave earlier (Bal, De Cooman, & Mol, 2013; Ng & Feldman, 2010). Therefore, we controlled for organizational tenure in our analyses. The slightly higher LMX average can largely be explained through the intentional exclusion of employees with recent supervisor changes.

The majority of participants in the effective sample chose German (68.9%), followed by French (23.0%), and Italian (8.1%) as the survey language. Forty-four (44.7%) percent were female respondents and the average age was 43.1 years ($SD = 12.2$). One third (33.3%) of the participants held a university degree and around one third (32.5%) indicated an apprenticeship as highest completed education. The average organizational tenure was 10.5 years ($SD = 9.7$). Most participants worked in organizations with 500 employees or more (41.5%), 36.5% worked in organizations with at least 50 employees, and 22.0% in smaller organizations.

Measures

The measures applied in this study were based on five-point Likert scales ranging from 1 ("*strongly disagree*") to 5 ("*strongly agree*"). To counteract potential threats of same source and common method bias, we measured our predictor and outcome variables at two points in time (Conway & Lance, 2010). PC breach, LMX, and CWX were measured at T1. Organizational cynicism was measured at T2. Unless otherwise indicated, the English version of the scales was translated into German, French, and Italian via translation and back-translation.

Organizational cynicism. The three dimensions of organizational cynicism were assessed with twelve items developed by Brandes, Dharwadkar, and Dean (1999). We used five items to measure cognitive cynicism, four items for affective cynicism, and three items for behavioral cynicism. A sample item for cognitive cynicism is "I believe that my organization says one thing and does another". Cronbach's alpha for this dimension was .90, 95% CI [.89, .91] in our study. A sample item for affective cynicism is "When I think about my organization, I feel tension" and the four-item scale yielded an internal consistency reliability of .91, 95% CI [.90, .92]. A sample item for behavioral cynicism is "I often talk to others about the way things are run at my organization". The three-item scale obtained a Cronbach's alpha of .74, 95% CI [.71, .77]. A full list of the twelve items can be found in the appendix.

PC breach. PC breach was assessed with Robinson and Morrison's (2000) five-item scale. It measures employees' global perception of a PC breach. A sample item is "Almost all the promises made by my employer during recruitment have been kept so far" (reverse coded). The scale yielded a coefficient alpha of .89, 95% CI [.87, .90] in our study.

Leader–member exchange. To measure LMX, we used a validated German version of Graen and Uhl-Bien's (1995) seven-item scale by Schyns (2002). A sample item is "I have an effective working relationship with my supervisor" and Cronbach's alpha was .90, 95% CI [.89,

.91]. The reliability of the interaction term of PC breach and LMX was .84 (Busemeyer & Jones, 1983).

Coworker exchange. Coworker exchange was assessed with Sherony and Green's (2002) six-item measure, based on the translation by Schyns (2002). A sample item is "I have an effective work relationship with my coworkers" and Cronbach's alpha was .86, 95% CI [.85, .88]. The reliability of the interaction term of PC breach and CWX was .78.

Control variables. We carefully selected a number of control variables following recommendations in the literature (Spector & Brannick, 2011). First, we integrated negative affectivity as control variable because its inclusion enables a better understanding of the incremental validity gains beyond this disposition, and to rule out alternative explanations (Bernerth & Aguinis, 2016). Negative affectivity is a chronic experience of distress, for instance, in aspects of one's work environment. Employees with high negative affectivity are more likely to become cynical toward their organization (Chiaburu et al., 2013). Negative affectivity was measured with Thompson's (2007) short five-item measure, translated into German and validated by Krohne, Egloff, Kohlmann, and Tausch (1996). Participants had to report the frequency of feeling, e.g., nervous and afraid (Cronbach's alpha: .77, 95% CI [.74, .79]). Second, we controlled for organizational tenure and organization size. Organizational tenure could interfere because employees with a higher tenure have accumulated more firm-specific knowledge and experience that help them interpret organizational actions in the way that they are less dependent on information from exchange relationships with others (Hunter & Thatcher, 2007; Ng & Sorensen, 2008). The size of the employing organization may also influence the degree to which employees depend on information from their social network to be able interpret organizational actions because large organizations have different organizational structures

(Connell, 2001; Man, Lau, & Chan, 2001). Further demographic control variables were not considered because based on their meta-analytic findings, Chiaburu et al. (2013) recommended that such variables shall only be included as control variables if there are strong theoretical reasons.

Results

First, we calculated the descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations among the study variables as presented in Table 1. Next, we applied a factorial parceling algorithm (Rogers & Schmitt, 2004) to have a reduced and equal number of three item parcels as indicators for each of the latent constructs (e.g., Kim et al., 2009). The indicators were mean-centered and standardized for the subsequent analysis.

Insert Table 1 and 2 about here

Measurement Model and Common Method Variance

We conducted confirmatory factor analyses, using the Mplus software (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2015) and maximum likelihood estimation, to examine the construct validity and empirical distinctiveness of the latent measures in this study. The best model fit was achieved by a full measurement model with seven latent factors. It distinguished between the three components of organizational cynicism, PC breach, LMX, CWX, and negative affectivity. All indicators loaded significantly at $p < .001$ on their respective factor ($\chi^2 = 455.22$, $df = 168$, $p < .001$, $\chi^2/df = 2.71$, CFI = .97, TLI = .96, RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .04, AIC = 35211.47). This

model was compared to four alternative models with a reduced number of factors, all of which were found to be inferior to the seven-factor model (see Table 2).

We further examined the extent of common method bias using the unmeasured latent method construct technique (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003; Richardson, Simmering, & Sturman, 2009). Each indicator was additionally allowed to load on an uncorrelated latent method factor. The fit of this model was significantly inferior ($\Delta\chi^2_{(2)}$ =356.65, $p < .001$) to the fit of the seven factor model without the unmeasured latent method construct (see Table 2). Only 1.9% of the total variance was accounted for by the common method factor. Thus, we concluded that common method variance was not a serious problem in this study (Richardson et al., 2009; Williams, Cote, & Buckley, 1989).

Hypotheses Testing

To test the hypothesized relationships, we used the latent moderated structural (LMS) equations approach in Mplus (Klein & Moosbrugger, 2000) following the procedure recommended by Maslowsky, Jager, and Hemken (2015). The LMS approach provides a maximum likelihood estimation of model parameters by adapting the expectation maximization algorithm based on the mixture distribution. As it is not necessary to create interaction terms between individual indicators of variables, this method partially addresses the problem of otherwise decreased reliability of interaction terms (Dawson, 2014; Klein & Moosbrugger, 2000). According to Steinmetz, Davidov, and Schmidt (2011), this approach is preferable over simple regressions for the examination of moderating effects since parameter estimates in the model are more accurate by accounting for different kinds of random and nonrandom measurement errors. This increases the study's power and reduces the likelihood of biased

estimates (Busemeyer & Jones, 1983; Little, Bovaird, & Widaman, 2006). As LMX and CWX are also simultaneously present in the work environment of employees, we jointly examined their moderating effects. Table 3 summarizes the final results.

Insert Table 3 about here

In line with Hypothesis 1, there was a positive and significant association between PC breach and cognitive cynicism ($\gamma = .43$, $SE = .05$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.32, .53]), affective cynicism ($\gamma = .28$, $SE = .05$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.19, .37]), as well as behavioral cynicism ($\gamma = .23$, $SE = .05$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.13, .34]). Thus, Hypothesis 1 was fully supported.

Next, we tested the moderating hypothesis for LMX. The interaction term of PC breach and LMX was significant for cognitive ($\gamma = .11$, $SE = .05$, $p < .05$, 95% CI [.01, .20]) and behavioral cynicism ($\gamma = .12$, $SE = .06$, $p < .05$, 95% CI [.01, .23]) but not when affective cynicism was the outcome ($\gamma = -.06$, $SE = .05$, $p = .29$, 95% CI [-.15, .04]). This implies that LMX moderated the effect of PC breach on cognitive cynicism and behavioral cynicism. To illustrate the moderating effects, we examined simple slopes at low and high levels of LMX (± 1SD). With regard to cognitive cynicism (Figure 1), the relationship was steeper at high LMX ($\gamma = .54$, $SE = .07$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.40, .67]) than at low LMX ($\gamma = .37$, $SE = .06$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.25, .49]). For behavioral cynicism (Figure 2), the simple slope for one standard deviation above the mean of LMX was significant, meaning that PC breach was strongly related to behavioral cynicism for high levels of LMX ($\gamma = .34$, $SE = .08$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.19, .49]). In contrast, the slope was not significant for low levels of LMX ($\gamma = .13$, $SE = .07$, $p = .07$, 95% CI [-.01, .27]). Despite both moderators were ordinal (Gardner, Harris, Li, Kirkman, & Mathieu,

2017), meaning that high LMX employees revealed lower cognitive and behavioral cynicism across varying levels of PC breach compared to low LMX employees, LMX exacerbated the effect of a PC breach on cognitive and behavioral cynicism, meaning that high LMX employees reacted more sensitively to a PC breach. Thus, Hypotheses 2a and 2c were confirmed, while we found no support for Hypothesis 2b.

Insert Figure 1 and 2 about here

Finally, we investigated the moderating effect of CWX. Contrary to our prediction, the interaction term of PC breach and CWX was neither significant for cognitive cynicism ($\gamma = -.06$, $SE = .05$, $p = .24$, 95% CI [-.16, .04]) nor for behavioral cynicism ($\gamma = -.01$, $SE = .06$, $p = .85$, 95% CI [-.12, .10]). With regard to affective cynicism, results yielded a negative and significant interaction term ($\gamma = -.12$, $SE = .05$, $p < .05$, 95% CI [-.23, -.02]). The slope for low CWX employees ($\gamma = .30$, $SE = .07$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.17, .43]) was steeper than the one for high CWX employees ($\gamma = .21$, $SE = .06$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.10, .33]). As can be seen in Figure 3, CWX attenuated the effect of PC breach on affective cynicism. Affective cynicism was lower for high CWX employees under a PC breach. Thus, Hypothesis 3b was confirmed, whereas Hypotheses 3a and 3c were not supported in our study.

Insert Figure 3 about here

Post Hoc Analysis

Additionally, we ran the analysis in a model with organizational cynicism as one construct to demonstrate the added value of distinguishing between the cognitive, affective, and behavioral components. The model fit (χ^2 = 1621.62, *df* = 211, TLI = .83, CFI = .86, RMSEA = .09, SRMR = .06, AIC = 40625.49) was inferior to the previously used model. The interaction term of PC breach and CWX was significant (γ = -.08, *SE* = .03, $p < .05$, 95% CI [-.14, -.01]) and the meaning of the moderating effect of CWX did not change. However, the moderating effects of LMX would have remained undiscovered since the interaction term was not significant (γ = .01, *SE* = .03, p = .87, 95% CI [-.06, .07]).

Furthermore, to better understand the nature of the identified moderating effects, we supplemented our pick-a-point approach and examined areas of significance. Results indicated a significant transition point only for behavioral cynicism at an LMX value of -.81 within the 95% CI region. While for 15.5% of the surveyed employees with LMX below this point, there was no significant association between PC breach and behavioral cynicism, it was significant for the majority of 84.5% of employees above and increased with higher levels of LMX.

Finally, a crossing-point of the slopes appeared in Figure 3 for the moderating effect of CWX at the value of -.07 of PC breach. Of all employees in our sample, 49.9% were below this point (50.1% above). Because both slopes were positive and high CWX employees revealed a lower affective cynicism level under high PC breach than low CWX employees, our hypothesis was confirmed (Gardner et al., 2017; Roisman et al., 2012). The results of the post hoc analysis further strengthen our findings and provide additional insights into how LMX and CWX moderate the association between PC breach and organizational cynicism components.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to empirically examine whether employees' cynical response to a PC breach was contingent on the quality of social exchange relationships with leaders and coworkers. In line with our hypotheses, results revealed that both LMX and CWX influenced the strength with which employees reacted to a PC breach. However, LMX and CWX moderated different components of organizational cynicism and had contrasting effects. High LMX employees demonstrated a stronger reaction in both cynical thoughts and behaviors in comparison to low LMX employees, who were less sensitive to a PC breach. By contrast, high CWX attenuated employees' emotional cynical reaction to a PC breach.

Theoretical Implications

The results of this study offer three major theoretical contributions to the organizational cynicism and social exchange literature. To begin with, the findings advance our understanding of why organizational cynicism can be more or less strongly affected by a PC breach. We found that this effect is contingent on social exchange relationships with leaders and coworkers since both LMX and CWX acted as moderators in our study. The post hoc analysis showed that the strength of the association between PC breach and cognitive and behavioral cynicism decreased with lower levels of LMX and even became insignificant for low LMX employees in the case of behavioral cynicism. This is in line with our reasoning that high LMX employees are more consternated by a PC breach. For affective cynicism, the strength of the association with PC breach was dependent on the level of CWX. In line with our hypothesis, higher CWX buffered the effect of a severe PC breach. Overall, these findings highlight the social embeddedness of organizational cynicism (Chiaburu et al., 2013; Dean et al., 1998).

Second, the divergent findings for LMX and CWX in our study highlight the different roles of the two social exchange relationships in employees' cynical response to a PC breach. As the moderating effects appeared for different components and had contrasting directions, close relationships to leaders and coworkers seem to have different functions. The moderating role of LMX is likely to depend on employees' tendency to perceive leaders, as opposed to coworkers, as representatives of the organization (e.g., Henderson et al., 2008; Morrison & Robinson, 1997). As such, leaders seem to strengthen employees' confidence to be protected from organizational threats and thus their sensitivity to PC breaches (Bal, Chiaburu, & Jansen, 2010; Restubog et al., 2010). High LMX probably strengthens the perceived inconsistency between the organization and its agents under a PC breach, leading to increased cynical thoughts and behaviors as a result of sensemaking efforts to cope with the breach. This line of reasoning is consistent with arguments in Blau's (1964) social exchange theory that social exchange relationships are interdependent. It seems that LMX interferes with the interpretation of and cynical reaction to a PC breach. On the affective level, prior evidence of both intensifying and buffering effects of LMX on the relationship between PC breach and feelings of violation suggests that there may be contrasting effects explaining why we could not find a significant moderation (Dulac et al., 2008; Suazo, 2011). Although high LMX employees may perceive more tension and a higher inconsistency under a PC breach, high LMX may still provide a source of emotional support for employees (Ng & Sorensen, 2008).

In CWX, the emotional dimension seems to play a crucial role because CWX only was a buffering moderator for affective cynicism. This is in line with meta-analytic results suggesting that coworkers' socioemotional support is a more effective buffer than leader support (Viswesvaran et al., 1999), probably because they interact more frequently and can consequently

provide timely support (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; Hüffmeier & Hertel, 2011). Absent power and status differences among coworkers are supposed to allow more authentic and informal social exchange and support (Karasek et al., 1982; Van Kleef et al., 2008; Woltin et al., 2011). Our findings demonstrate that CWX buffers the emotional reaction but can apparently not prevent cynical behaviors and the conclusion that the organization lacks integrity, i.e., the development of cynical thoughts. Coworkers may interfere in two contradicting ways. On the one hand, coworkers may calm down the focal employee by providing strategies how to effectively deal with a PC breach (Bankins, 2015). As badmouthing of colleagues is related to organizational cynicism (Wilkerson et al., 2008), coworkers, on the other hand, may also be able to reinforce behavioral cynicism under certain conditions by inciting each other. Different dynamics in the relationship between coworkers need further investigation and future research is encouraged to examine under which conditions CWX may even foster cynicism. More specifically, future research could investigate potential contagion effects of organizational cynicism among coworkers using team-based research designs.

Taken together, it is interesting to see that LMX and CWX had moderating effects in the opposite direction and for different components of organizational cynicism in our study. In Ng and colleagues' (2014) study, temporal changes in LMX or CWX have led to congruent buffering moderating effects for aggressive voice behavior as a response to PC breach. Although these findings may not directly pertain to organizational cynicism due to conceptual differences between voice and cynicism (Naus et al., 2007), it becomes clear from these insights that future research should examine temporal trends in variables during and after PC breaches (Achnak & Hansen, 2019; Rigotti & de Jong, 2019). Overall, our finding of opposing effects for LMX and CWX on breaches in the employer-employee relationship contributes to social exchange theory

by emphasizing the influence of social context, status, and roles of counterparts in social exchange relationships and by pointing to complex interactions between different kinds of social exchange.

Further, differentiating between cognitive, affective, and behavioral components may contribute to reconciling some of the inconsistent findings regarding the moderating role of LMX in response to PC breaches. An intensifying effect has been found for in-role performance and organizational citizenship behavior (Bal et al., 2010; Restubog et al., 2010), and a buffering effect for counterproductive work behavior (Griep et al., 2016), aggressive voice behavior (Ng et al., 2014), organizational identification and citizenship behavior (Lu, Shen, & Zhao, 2015) (for an overview see Doden et al., 2018). Our non-significant finding for affective cynicism is especially interesting in light of the simultaneous existence of empirical support for both an intensifying (Suazo, 2011) and a buffering (Dulac et al., 2008) effect of LMX for PC violation, which is an emotional response to PC breaches (Robinson & Morrison, 2000). Indeed, both alternatives may be plausible but contingent on additional boundary conditions such as the frequency of daily interactions or the hierarchical distance between leader and employee, which are essential for the ability to perceive and provide socio-emotional support (Hüffmeier & Hertel, 2011; Thoits, 1995). Doden et al. (2018) have further shown that individuals' career orientations can be decisive whether LMX is a buffer or intensifier. Another reason for inconsistent findings might be that some consequences of PC breaches take more time to develop, giving leaders time to provide support in high LMX. For instance, severe behavioral retaliating consequences may only be taken as a final step if remediation has failed (Bankins, 2015; Solinger, Hofmans, Bal, & Jansen, 2016; Tomprou et al., 2015). In summary, longitudinal research designs and a differentiation between cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses to PC breach might help to

further resolve the inconsistent findings for the moderating role of social exchange in response to PC breaches.

Finally, our study contributes to more conceptual clarity of organizational cynicism. The different effect sizes for the association between perceived PC breach and the three dimensions of organizational cynicism (cognitive: .43; affective: .28; behavioral: .23) warrant their separate examination in the current and in future studies, which resonates with the general tenor in contemporary attitude research (Fabrigar, MacDonald, & Wegener, 2005). Our findings agree with Johnson and O'Leary-Kelly (2003), where the correlation coefficient of PC breach with cognitive cynicism was larger than with affective cynicism. A potential explanation is that both cynical thoughts and the perception of a PC breach, which is a cognitive evaluation (Morrison & Robinson, 1997), take place on a cognitive level, whereas affective cynicism may evolve from the disappointment conveyed by the breach experience. Finally, behavioral cynicism includes retaliatory aspects, which may only be initiated from a certain threshold on (Rigotti, 2009; Rigotti & de Jong, 2019). The previously discussed varying moderating effects of LMX and CWX signify once more the need to distinguish between the cynicism components and preclude generalizations across dimensions. This is supported by our post hoc analysis because using a global measure would have obscured the moderating effects of LMX.

Practical Implications

Overall, the findings build on prior research that PC breaches are one of the main contextual determinants of organizational cynicism (Chiaburu et al., 2013). This implies that organizations should make an effort to counteract organizational cynicism by actively managing employees' PCs that are formed through messages from various organizational agents (Alcover et al., 2016). Transparent and consistent communication as well as a close monitoring of

employees in times of high job demands may provide useful means to minimize the risk of unintentional PC breaches (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019; Vantilborgh, Bidee, Pepermans, Griep, & Hofmans, 2016).

Second, the magnitude of the PC breach–cynicism association was contingent on the quality of social exchange relationships with leaders and coworkers. As our results showed, high LMX employees tend to become more sensitive to PC breaches. Therefore, leaders should be made aware of their role as organizational representatives and the potential implications thereof. It is important to notice that these findings do not imply that low LMX is preferable. In fact, LMX had a strong and direct negative effect on employees' organizational cynicism in our study. LMX was effective in suppressing cynicism at low levels of PC breach but could not completely compensate cynical thoughts or behaviors in reaction to severe PC breaches. Leaders play an important role in managing employees' PCs as they represent a pivotal link between the organization and employees (Henderson et al., 2008). Hence, leaders are key to consistently implementing the tools previously described to avoid PC breaches.

Finally, this study highlights the importance of CWX and its additional value in comparison to LMX. Our findings showed that employees' cynical emotional reaction to severe PC breaches is mitigated under high CWX. Therefore, human resource management should promote opportunities for employees to engage in group development interventions with their coworkers, such as team building with a focus on fostering interpersonal relations.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

There are several limitations of this study that need to be acknowledged. Most notably, both PC breach and organizational cynicism denote a type of violation of the social exchange

relationship that could be concurrently present (Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003). Despite the measurement of independent and dependent variables at two time points, this limits the possibility to draw causal inferences. Research has shown that cynical employees tend to experience further PC breaches as they already believe that the organization lacks integrity and critically evaluate organizational actions (Griep et al., 2018). Further, it is plausible that being cynical toward the organization could be interpreted by organizational agents as a negative reciprocation, leading to deliberate PC breaches by the organization. Only experimental or longitudinal cross-lagged research designs could provide more insights into the causal relationships between these variables.

Second, incremental explanatory gains above and beyond trait cynicism could not be assessed in this study as we were not able to control for trait cynicism in our analysis. We only controlled for negative affectivity as a dispositional characteristic.

A third limitation pertains to the underlying assumptions for the moderating effects of LMX that we could not measure directly. Our arguments rely on the assumption that leaders are perceived as representatives of the organization, which leads to a larger perceived inconsistency in high LMX under a PC breach. Future research is advised to examine these underlying mechanisms more closely. Although it is an assumption frequently found in the literature to consider leaders as organizational representatives (e.g., Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002; Henderson et al., 2008), it may be worth examining upon which conditions this assumption holds. Likewise, it would be interesting to investigate how the leader’s actual position and power influence employees’ perception in this regard.

Finally, some methodological limitations need to be addressed. First, common method and source bias could pose a methodological threat because all variables were self-reported by

employees (Podsakoff et al., 2003). We tried to minimize this bias by using a two-wave time-lagged design and a random item order in the survey (Conway & Lance, 2010), and the test with an unmeasured latent method construct indicated that method variance was negligible. However, future research may additionally include other ratings (e.g., for LMX or CWX) to increase the study's validity. Instead of survey data, behavioral cynicism might be measured via observations. Second, mean differences in a few variables between the final sample and people who dropped out could potentially reduce the generalizability of our results. The lower mean in PC breach could be related to the higher organizational tenure in our final sample as employees with fulfilled PCs tend to stay longer (Bal et al., 2013). By controlling for organizational tenure, we observed no changes of our final results. The slightly higher mean of LMX in the final sample can largely be explained through the exclusion of employees with recent supervisor changes. Generally, the study sample was large and diverse with employees from different industries and occupations, speaking in favor of its generalizability. Eventually, the R-square increase by the significant interaction terms was not very high. This, however, could be due to the fact that the incremental variance explained by interactions tends to be rather small in general (Aiken & West, 1991).

Conclusion

In the current study, we investigated how LMX and CWX moderate the association between PC breach and organizational cynicism. The findings are of both theoretical and practical relevance because they advance our understanding of variations in the strength of the influence of PC breach on cynical thoughts, emotions, and behavioral tendencies. Our systematic and separate analysis on the cognitive, affective, and behavioral level contributes to further

conceptual clarity of organizational cynicism and provides deeper insights into how cynicism develops as a consequence of PC breach by highlighting that leaders and coworkers seem to play different roles on different aspects in this process. As our results suggest that organizational cynicism is malleable through the quality of social exchange relationships, they provide a possible pathway for organizations to counteract cynicism among their workforce.

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Tables

Table 1

Descriptive statistics and correlations

	Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Cognitive cynicism	2.42	.92		.63***	.68***	.57***	-.47***	-.26***	.33***	-.03	.09*
2	Affective cynicism	1.86	.90	.60***		.67***	.53***	-.54***	-.34***	.55***	.03	.06
3	Behavioral cynicism	2.74	.86	.51***	.53***		.43***	-.45***	-.20***	.41***	-.06	.07
4	Psychological contract breach	2.01	.84	.53***	.48***	.33***		-.54***	-.33***	.37***	.03	.09*
5	Leader–member exchange	3.80	.77	-.43***	-.48***	-.35***	-.49***		.44***	-.39***	-.06	-.07
6	Coworker exchange	3.69	.66	-.23***	-.30***	-.13***	-.30***	.39***		-.36***	.00	-.02
7	Negative affectivity	2.09	.59	.27***	.48***	.32***	.31***	-.34***	-.30***		.01	.06
8	Organizational tenure[a]	10.46	9.67	-.03	.03	-.05	.02	-.06	.00	-.00		.17***
9	Organization size[b]	3.02	1.58	.09*	.06	.06	.09*	-.06	-.03	.05	.17***	

Note. $N = 781$ (pairwise deletion for Pearson's correlation coefficients); Pearson's correlation coefficients are listed below the diagonal and measurement error-corrected estimated correlations obtained in SEM are presented above the diagonal.

[a]Organizational tenure: measured in years.

[b]Organization size: 1 = 10 to 49 employees, 2 = 50 to 249 employees, 3 = 250 to 499 employees, 4 = 500 to 999 employees, 5 = 1000 employees or more.

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed).

Table 2

Results of confirmatory factor analyses for different factor models

Model	χ^2	*df*	χ^2/df	TLI	CFI	SRMR	RMSEA	AIC	$\Delta\chi^2$
Full Model[a]	455.22	168	2.71	.96	.97	.04	.05	35211.47	
Full Model[b]	811.87	170	4.78	.92	.94	.10	.07	35564.12	356.65***
6-Factor Model	856.57	174	4.92	.92	.93	.05	.07	35600.82	401.35***
5-Factor Model[c]	1565.17	179	8.74	.84	.86	.06	.10	36299.42	1109.95***
5-Factor Model[d]	2324.88	179	12.99	.75	.79	.09	.12	37059.12	1869.66***
1-Factor Model	4736.07	189	25.06	.49	.55	.12	.18	39450.32	4280.85***

Note. $N = 781$; χ^2 = chi-square; *df* = degrees of freedom; TLI = Tucker–Lewis Index; CFI = comparative fit index; SRMR = standardized root mean square residual; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation.

AIC = Akaike's information criterion; $\Delta\chi^2$ = difference in χ^2 values between the respective model and the final model (Full Model[a]).

[a]Full model without unmeasured latent method construct.

[b]Full model with unmeasured latent method construct.

[c]5-Factor model without distinguishing between cognitive, affective, and behavioral cynicism.

[d]5-Factor model without distinguishing between social exchange relationships (psychological contract breach, leader–member exchange, and coworker exchange).

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed).

Table 3

Results of the latent moderated structural (LMS) equations approach for cognitive, affective, and behavioral cynicism

	Cognitive Cynicism				Affective Cynicism				Behavioral Cynicism			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2	
	Estimate	*SE*	Estimate	*SE*	Estimate	*SE*	Estimate	*SE*	Estimate	*SE*	Estimate	*SE*
NA	.30***	.05	.30***	.05	.31***	.05	.30***	.05	.30***	.05	.30***	.05
Tenure	-.05	.03	-.05	.03	-.00	.03	.01	.03	-.08*	.03	-.08*	.03
Organization size	.03	.03	.03	.03	-.00	.03	.00	.03	.02	.03	.02	.03
PC breach	.42***	.05	.43***	.05	.30***	.04	.28***	.05	.20***	.05	.23***	.05
LMX	-.19***	.05	-.23***	.05	-.29***	.05	-.28***	.05	-.26***	.05	-.29***	.05
CWX	.04	.04	.06	.05	-.05	.04	-.04	.04	.08	.04	.08	.05
PC breach x LMX			.11*	.05			-.06	.05			.12*	.06
PC breach x CWX			-.06	.05			-.12*	.05			-.01	.06
R^2	.36		.37		.45		.47		.31		.32	

Note. $N = 781$; NA = negative affectivity; PC = psychological contract; LMX = leader–member exchange; CWX = coworker exchange.

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed).

Figures

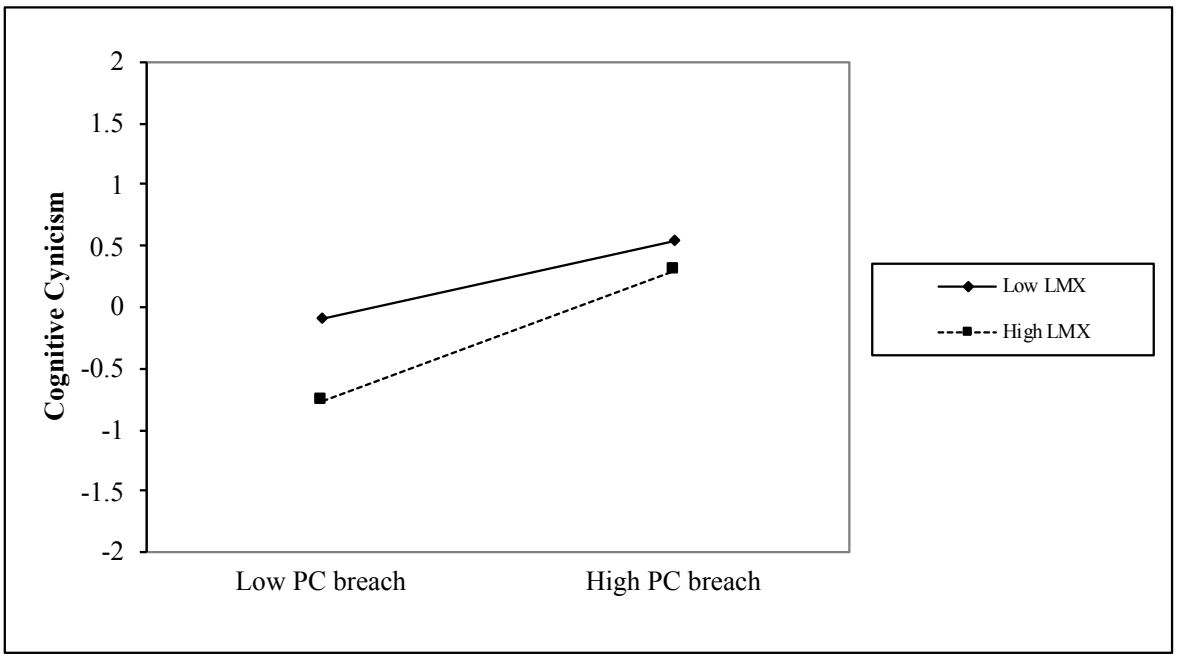

Figure 1. The moderating effect of leader–member exchange (LMX) on the relationship between psychological contract (PC) breach and cognitive cynicism.

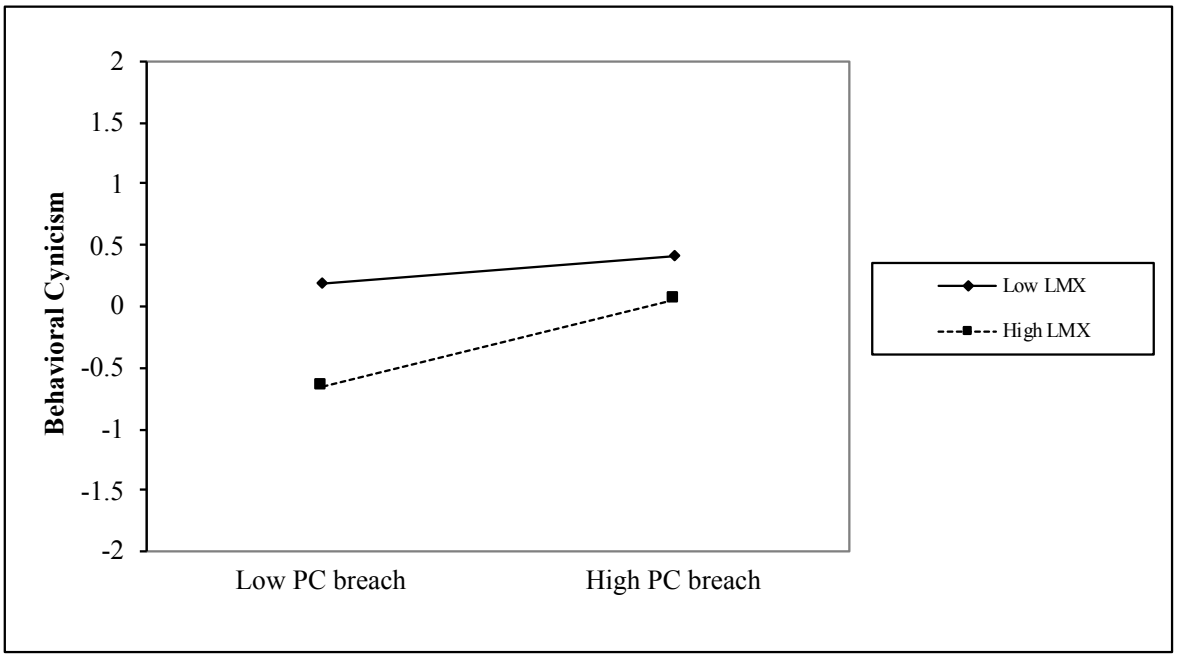

Figure 2. The moderating effect of leader–member exchange (LMX) on the relationship between psychological contract (PC) breach and behavioral cynicism.

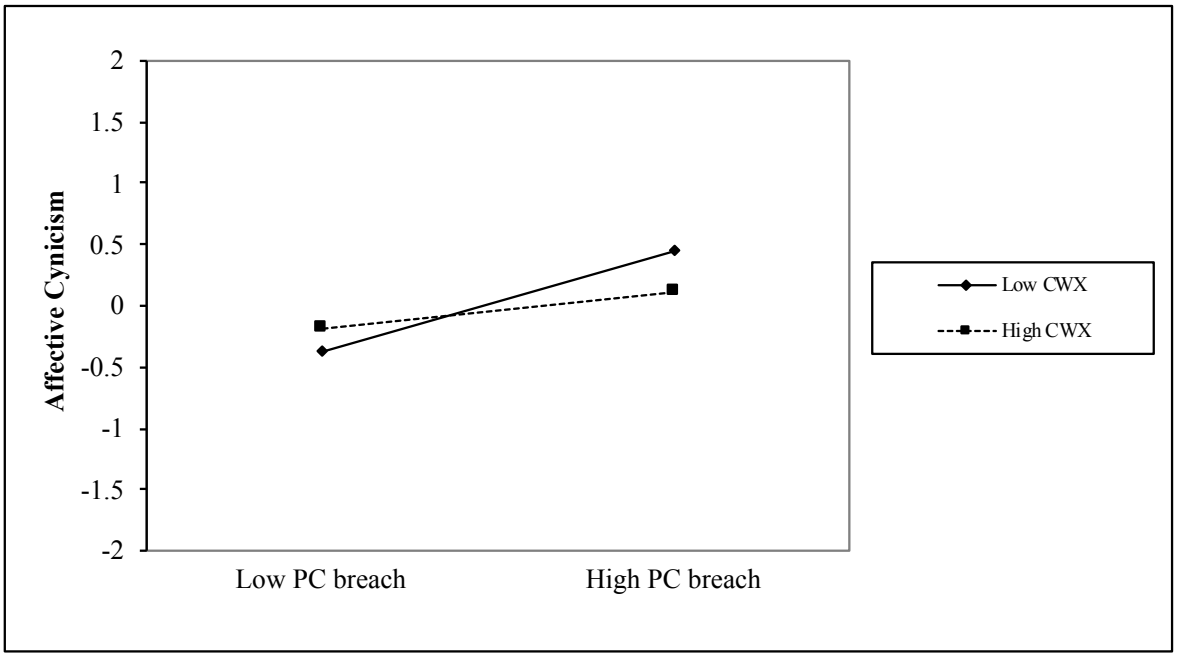

Figure 3. The moderating effect of coworker exchange (CWX) on the relationship between psychological contract (PC) breach and affective cynicism.

Appendix

Results of confirmatory factor analysis for organizational cynicism

	Items	Factor Loadings		
	Cognitive cynicism			
1	I believe that my organization says one thing and does another.	.88		
2	I see little similarity between what my organization says it will do and what it actually does.	.87		
3	The organization's policies, goals, and practices, seem to have little in common.	.78		
4	When my organization says it's going to do something, I wonder if it will really happen.	.75		
5	My organization expects one thing of its employees, but rewards another.	.73		
	Affective cynicism			
6	When I think about my organization, I feel aggravation.		.91	
7	When I think about my organization, I feel irritation.		.91	
8	When I think about my organization, I feel tension.		.85	
9	When I think about my organization, I feel anxiety.		.72	
	Behavioral cynicism			
10	I criticize organizational practices and policies with others.			.80
11	I complain about how things happen at my organization to friends outside the organization.			.77
12	I often talk to others about the way things are run at my organization.			.52

Note. $N = 781$. The table shows the standardized factor loadings of the confirmatory three-factor analysis for organizational cynicism ($\chi^2 = 272.58$, $df = 51$, $p < .001$, CFI = .96, TLI = .95, SRMR = .046, RMSEA = .075, AIC = 20519.69). All item significantly loaded on their respective factor at $p < .001$ (two-tailed).